

Counseling Matters

Accountability and School Counseling Programs

A very wise graduate school professor of mine advised us “if something is worth doing, it’s worth evaluating”. And so it is with school counseling programs. In the last edition of Counselink, I provided an update of the No Child Left Behind Act. One of the major priorities of this law is accountability, and school counselors are no exception. The measurement of and reporting on the progress of all students and subgroups of students (including race/ethnicity, children with disabilities, economically disadvantaged, and limited English proficient), includes the effectiveness of school counseling services.

The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs is built on a four-component framework for school counseling, including accountability. This component requires reporting on the results of your program’s efforts by answering the question: “How are students different as a result of the school counseling program?” In Wisconsin, all three domains of the Wisconsin Developmental Guidance Model (personal/social, academic, and career development) must be addressed for all students. By determining where your district’s and/or building’s needs lie, examining data that demonstrates whether services are being provided to meet these needs, and what the outcomes of these services are, we are able to determine effectiveness and plan for the future. Sharing these results with stakeholders, including school boards, administrators, and parents is a solid way of advocating for your students and your program.

There are various components of evaluation for school counseling programs, including provision and delivery of curriculum and services, outcomes for students and others, and effectiveness of the school counselor. PI 34, the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, lays out seven Pupil Services Standards and twelve School Counselor Content Guidelines which will guide the practice of school counselors graduating from programs after August 31, 2004. These standards and guidelines will impact us all, as they lay out expectations of professional practice of school counselors implementing a school counseling program. These will also provide as a means of formal counselor evaluation, as well as the basis for self-evaluation and professional development.

If we truly believe our school counseling programs must be an integral part of every school’s educational program, then evaluation and accountability for results is our responsibility. If it’s worth doing, it’s worth evaluating.

PLEASE NOTE: My article in the Autumn, 2003 Counselink contains an error. Under ‘Understanding NCLB’, Number 2 should read: “State testing in science at least once in grades 3-5, 6-9, and grades **10-12**. I apologize any confusion I may have caused as a result.

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